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ARCHITECT-BUILDERS IN LONDON AND EDINBURGH, c. 1750–1800, AND THE MARKET FOR EXPERTISE

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ABSTRACT. *Eighteenth-century architect-builders were a small group, but important for understanding the market strategies of knowledge-based experts in an age of rapid growth in technical information before the creation of modern professions. This article confronts a teleological historiography of emerging professionalization. It is focused on Robert Mylne and several of his contemporaries in Edinburgh and London, including a number of successful London-based Scots who were active as architects, builders, engineers, and surveyors, and self-styled in all these areas when it suited them. It supplies an account of what it took for building experts to establish themselves and flourish in big cities and the ways in which such experts navigated, controlled, and accommodated an environment of unregulated expertise that largely suited contemporary practitioners. Individual, family, and collective market strategies are examined in detail and the final section is a close analysis of the activities of the Architects Club in the 1790s.*

A London-published ‘career guide’ of 1747 declared that an ‘Architect is the Person who draws the Design and Plan of a Palace, or other Edifice: where he describes, in Profile, the whole Building in all its proportional Dimensions’. The guide further suggested that

An Architect properly, ought to be of no other employ; but must be a Judge of Work, and how it is executed to his Design. He must know of the Secrets of the Bricklayer, Stonemason, Carpenter, Joiner, Carver, and all other Branches employed in building and finishing a house.

Yet, the guide cautioned that it ‘scarce know of any in England who have had an education regularly designed for the Profession. Bricklayers, Carpenters, etc all commence Architects; especially in and about London, where there go but few Rules to the building of a City-House.’¹

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¹ Robert Campbell, *The London tradesman. Being a compendious view of all the trades, professions, arts, both liberal and mechanic, now practised in the cities of London and Westminster. Calculated for the information of parents, and instruction of youth in their choice of business* (London, 1747), pp. 155–7.

A directory of the 'masters and professors of the liberal and polite arts and sciences' who were practising in London in the early 1760s differentiated under their distinct listings such professional groups as 'Fellows, Candidates and Licentiates of the Royal College of Physicians'; 'Examined and Approved Surgeons'; and 'Eminent Attorneys', but placed architects, whose functions were not specified, in the same category as painters, engravers, and authors.² There was a separate listing for 'surveyors of land and buildings' and another for 'carpenters and builders' who were described as –

The ancient and useful Mechanic Art of Carpentry contains simply no more than the method of cutting, planing, and joining of wood in various forms for the construction of Houses and Ships; but of late years, the capital Masters of the two branches of House and Ship Carpentry, have assumed the name of Builders, and Ship-builders; for this reason, because they make an estimate of the total expense of a House or a Ship, and contract for the execution of the whole for the amount of their estimate; so that they take upon themselves the proving of all materials, and employ their own Masons, Plumbers, Smiths etc. whereas formerly it was the custom of gentlemen and merchants to apply to the several masters in each branch, and employ them in executing their plans: this indeed, is sometimes the case at present, but very rarely, particularly with regard to Houses, whole streets, having lately been erected by Builders.³

Such descriptions for the different branches of the buildings industry, and London house building in particular, reflect fluidity in the tasks undertaken by tradesmen and the ambiguous status of architects, together with the market opportunities available to entrepreneurs. Certain groups of tradesmen were branching into new areas of business that included building design and project management and could do so, given mass demand for a standardized product – the terraced townhouse – sometimes by taking advantage of published pattern-books produced by architects to supplement their incomes.⁴ As a professional cohort, architects were grasping for an ideal – 'ought to be of no other employ' – that barely existed. Yet, in the mid-eighteenth century, there were growing numbers of men who defined themselves first and foremost as architects, in contrast to fifty years previously when the occupation was hardly known in Britain.⁵ Indeed, in the London *Universal Director* of 1763, there were fourteen, mostly young, men who advertised as architects, of whom eight appended the title 'Esq.' to their name, a status-promoting device absent among the artists, engravers, and writers with whom they were listed. It is harder to be

² Thomas Mortimer, *The universal director. Or, the nobleman and gentleman's true guide to the masters and professors of the liberal and polite arts and sciences. In three parts to which is added a distinct list of the booksellers, distinguishing the particular branches of their trade* (London, 1763).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

⁴ See Eileen Harris and Nicholas Savage, *British architectural books and writers, 1556–1785* (London, 1990); Rachel Stewart, *The town house in Georgian London* (London, 2009).

⁵ Howard Colvin, *A biographical dictionary of British architects, 1600–1840* (London, 1978), ch. 1.

certain about the numbers of architects in Edinburgh. A modern survey suggests there were five or six Edinburgh-based men who routinely described themselves as 'architects' in the mid-eighteenth century, but London-based architects of Scottish background also carried out commissions in Edinburgh. In both cities, there were many more builders and carpenters who also designed buildings, whilst in London there were also well-established and mostly older architects deriving most of their income from state and church sinecures with little need to advertise for business. One of the new men, with interests in both capital cities and in a range of building projects, was Robert Mylne.

Robert Mylne (1733–1811) was born into a long-established family of Edinburgh builders and masons.⁶ He was apprenticed as a carpenter in his teens, worked as a woodcarver in his early twenties, but, along with his younger brother William, aspired to an architect's training in Europe. Initially resisted by his father, by a combination of persistence and willingness to pay his own way, Mylne, with limited finances and no patrons – in contrast with contemporaries such as Robert Adam – travelled to Italy hitch-hiking and on foot.

Many curious adventures we get to laugh at, sometimes we are in noblemen's chaise and Maltese knights company and other times we're tramping along the road with soldiers, sailors, or anything that will afford us a perfect knowledge of the manners, and customs of this nation.⁷

Acquisition of knowledge in the form of language, customs and manners, aesthetics, and taste was the primary aim of a European tour. Even mixing with soldiers and sailors on the road offered useful insights. Of more importance, however, was the acquisition of technical skills in design, drawing, and aesthetics for, by the mid-eighteenth century, it was necessary for career success that architects be artists capable of producing highly finished drawings for clients. Such drawings had financial worth as the stock-in-trade of practitioners and were assets that could be sold or willed to kin.⁸ Aspirant architects took classes in the art academies that flourished in continental Europe, which also offered competitive prizes and fellowships, the most famous being St Luke's Academy in Rome. Robert Mylne benefited spectacularly from this strategy when he won the St Luke's Silver Medal for architecture in 1758, which led to his being admitted as fellow to several Italian art academies and enhanced his reputation as a teacher of drawing among British 'grand tourists', the source of his income and elite contacts in Italy.⁹ These achievements finally persuaded the elder Mylne to embrace his son's career ambitions, and when Robert set himself up in London

⁶ See Robert Ward, *The surprising life of Robert Mylne: the man who buried Nelson* (London, 2007); Roger J. Woodley, 'Robert Mylne' (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1998); Mylne family papers (Myfam), Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), London.

⁷ RIBA, Myfam/4/13, Robert Mylne to Thomas Mylne, 3 Jan. 1755, Marseilles.

⁸ A. A. Tait, 'The sale of Robert Adam's drawings', *Burlington Magazine*, 120 (1978), pp. 451–5.

⁹ RIBA, Myfam/4/34–7, Robert Mylne to William Mylne, Sept.–Dec. 1758, Rome.

the following year, the prize was key to his success in one of the most important public building competitions of the decade: designing and building a new bridge over the Thames at Blackfriars.¹⁰

The Blackfriars Bridge project took ten years to complete and attracted public interest and praise. It was attended by many problems over payment and much ridicule directed at Mylne for excessive self-promotion and 'puffing', but it also defined his reputation and career and generated further commissions for buildings, bridges, and engineering projects.¹¹ Appointments to public posts such as surveyor to St Paul's Cathedral and to the New River Company, a London drainage scheme, generated income and prestige, but Mylne was also a busy architect who travelled the country to carry out work including country-house and hospital design. Mylne was a member of a social circle that included the novelist Tobias Smollet, the medical Hunter brothers, and the engraver Robert Strange.¹² He was elected to the Royal Society in 1767 and was one of the founder members of the Society of Civil Engineers in the 1770s. Canal and waterway projects figured large in his interests in the 1780s and, towards the close of his long career, he moved mainly into a property and land consultancy practice and managed renovation projects for some of his earlier buildings. Robert Mylne married the daughter of a London-based Scottish surgeon and his second son, William, was an architect and engineer who laid out streets and houses in suburban London, designed churches, and was involved in drainage and other water schemes, taking on several of the surveyor posts held by his father.¹³ Mylne's complex and evolving market profile over many decades was at odds with what is commonly defined as a standard pattern of evolving professional expertise and practice but, though distinct in certain ways, it was not unusual when viewed from an eighteenth-century perspective.

According to conventional argument, modern professions are institutionalized occupations based on a skilled intellectual technique, whereby the competence of practitioners is guaranteed to prospective purchasers of the service. The critical step in the professionalization process occurred when organizations, backed by regulation and legislation, gained collective control of the market, allowing them to enhance the character of the expertise held by professionals through systematic education and examination and, in parallel, create an artificial scarcity in supply of the expertise, thereby shifting the balance of power in client relationships in favour of the professional. This

¹⁰ RIBA, Myfam/4/50, Robert Mylne to Thomas Mylne, 23 Feb. 1760, London. In announcing his competition success, Mylne described this as 'an honour to my country, and to those [that] brought me into the world and conducted me so far hithertoo'.

¹¹ Stana Nenadic, 'Portraits of Scottish professional men in London c. 1760–1830: careers, connections, reputations', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34 (2011), pp. 1–17.

¹² Alexander Carlyle, *Autobiography of the Rev. Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk containing memorials of the men and events of his time* (Edinburgh, 1860), p. 96.

¹³ Bertha Porter, 'William Chadwell Mylne, 1781–1863', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (ODNB).

mostly occurred in the early to mid-nineteenth century and, in the case of architecture, is usually dated to 1835 with the foundation of the Institute of British Architects.¹⁴ By divorcing the architect from the builder in particular and also from the engineer,¹⁵ the Institute sought to raise its member's status, but simultaneously shut off several of the commonest routes for supplementing incomes. Unsurprisingly, there were many challenges to the rules in its early years.¹⁶

Nineteenth-century professionalization was driven by 'strategies of closure', a term coined by Harold Perkin, and by a subtle system of social ranking whereby some professions, such as architects, enjoyed higher prestige and reward than other experts, such as surveyors or engineers.¹⁷ Professional practice in the early modern period was defined by closure of a different variety, for it was narrow in scope and tightly controlled through state and church patronage.¹⁸ In the eighteenth century, however, there was an explosion in demand for building experts and a parallel collapse in earlier forms of corporate control, with the consequence that many knowledge-based occupations were fluid as well as brutally competitive. Those involved in the most lucrative of professional marketplaces required considerable social and information-gathering skills to negotiate the face-to-face requirements of the eighteenth-century London-focused patronage system.¹⁹ Their market strategies, which included frequent mutation of their professed fields of expertise, were mostly designed to navigate competition through constructing personalized linkages with potential clients, and through creating a 'reputation', often in areas tangential to their expertise. Professionals harnessed elite cultural practices to cultivate an image as men of learning and taste; they also possessed certain types of family life and leisure that mirrored the family and leisure of their patrons.

Architects were a small group, but they are important for understanding the market strategies of knowledge-based experts in an age of rapid growth in technical information before the creation of modern professions. As they struggled to reconcile intense competition, organizational and technical changes in the construction industry, and the rapidly shifting knowledge base to their expertise with the exhausting dynamics of the patronage system and the demands of maintaining wider family interests, their experiences were mirrored

¹⁴ Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 39; J. Mordaunt Crook, 'The pre-Victorian architect: professionalism and patronage', *Architectural History*, 12 (1969), pp. 62–78.

¹⁵ See Andrew Saint, *Architect and engineer: a study in sibling rivalry* (New Haven, CT, 2007).

¹⁶ Anon., 'The present state of the profession of architect, surveyor, and of the building trades in England', *London's Architecture Magazine*, 1 (1834), pp. 12–16.

¹⁷ Harold Perkin, *The rise of professional society: England since 1880* (London, 1989), p. 2; P. J. Corfield, *Power and the professions in Britain, 1700–1850* (London, 1995).

¹⁸ Colvin, *Dictionary*, ch. 1; R. S. Mylne, *The master masons to the crown of Scotland and their works* (Edinburgh, 1893).

¹⁹ For examples, see Stana Nenadic, ed., *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century* (Lewisburg, PA, 2010). On the relative place of professionals in wealth accumulation, see Patrick Colquhoun, *Treatise on the wealth, power and resources of the British Empire* (London, 1815).

by other knowledge-holding groups, particularly the medical profession, with whom architects had close relationships. This article, which focuses on Robert Mylne and several contemporaries in Edinburgh and London, addresses such strategies and their deployment in an environment of unregulated expertise. It supplies an account of what it took for architect-builders to establish themselves and flourish and the combination of individual, family and collective devices employed. It seeks to demolish a largely teleological historiography of emerging professionalization which sees all pre-nineteenth century developments as leading towards the founding of monolithic regulatory bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects with their emphatic values and structures. By contrast, it considers other forms of organizational responses for protecting and promoting collective interests within a broadly defined building industry that were distinct to the eighteenth century.

I

All self-styled eighteenth-century architects designed buildings and supervised building projects, but they also undertook various other activities to make an income, establish a reputation, and develop their client base. One such activity was surveying which, according to the *Universal Directory* of 1763, was a distinct occupation of ten individuals practising in London, some of whom were additionally described as civil engineer, but none, according to this listing, also practising as architect.²⁰ Surveying was for a set fee advertised in advance. When embarking on his career in the 1760s, Robert Mylne charged a gentlemanly one guinea for a survey report on a London townhouse, providing details on damp problems, the state of roof and chimneys, or the kitchen utilities, which took half a day to complete where no significant travel was entailed.²¹ An easy source of income for an expert opinion, surveying sometimes gave rise to improvement work for an architect or builder and was useful in establishing relationships with future patrons for building design. Indeed, when faced with the option of a builder, surveyor, or architect to undertake a house survey, it is interesting to speculate as to why clients chose one over the other. Cost must have been a concern, since builders were cheaper, but engaging the services of a 'gentleman' was clearly another factor for clients, including the many genteel single women in London and Edinburgh, who set a high store by politeness. Yet, such pedestrian services said little of architects as far as building design was concerned, whilst the role of surveyor, which relied on an intimate knowledge of the building trades, could compromise a reputation. Some architects were more surveyors than architects, which was a criticism commonly made of James Craig (1744–95) who laid out the New Town street plan in Edinburgh, but did

²⁰ Mortimer, *Universal director*, pp. 71–2.

²¹ RIBA, MyFam, Robert Mylne diary, 22 Oct. 1764: 'Gave Mr Winter a consultation on the value of a house in Pall Mall. £1.1s.'

not design the buildings.²² None of the London architects in the 1763 *Universal Director* admitted to being a surveyor and, when taking advice on his future career in the 1750s, Robert Adam (1728–92) was warned by Sir William Stanhope ‘not to survey buildings, only to give designs’.²³

All architects were, however, surveyors of houses and land, a fact that Adam admitted later in his career.²⁴ Land survey and laying-out estate policies for major clients was a source of long-term work and stable income for many, including Robert Mylne on the estates of the duke of Argyll in Scotland, or Edinburgh-based John Baxter (1740–98) who worked for many years for the duke of Gordon in north-east Scotland.²⁵ Many of the lucrative sinecures and government offices sought and advertised by architects in London drew as much on the expertise of the surveyor as designer.²⁶ Robert Mylne derived his most stable lifetime income from the post of surveyor to the New River Company, which was a public drainage scheme that yielded £200 a year from the late 1760s, together with a house in Islington.²⁷ Surveyor posts, which drew on design expertise, also generated prestige. Indeed, Mylne’s appointment to the surveyorship of St Paul’s Cathedral from 1766, whilst not especially lucrative, secured his final resting-place in that great edifice, alongside Wren.²⁸ Adam and William Chambers (1723–96) also held prestigious and well-rewarded official surveyorships in London. The Office of Works, held by Chambers under royal patronage, offered an annual salary of £300.²⁹

Requiring a similarly detailed knowledge of the building trades and therefore potentially compromising status, but a useful source of income, was the practice of auditing tradesmen’s accounts, which was an increasingly technical matter that went beyond the competence of most clients or their lawyers. Mylne provides an illustration. As the son of a builder and apprentice-trained himself as a carpenter, he could give an expert eye to accounts for materials and work undertaken on building projects with which he was not directly associated.

²² Kitty Cruft and Andrew Fraser, eds., *James Craig, 1744–1795* (Edinburgh, 1995).

²³ National Records of Scotland (NRS), GD18/4800, Robert Adam to Margaret Adam, 21 Feb. 1756, Rome. I am grateful to Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik for permission to quote from the papers of the Clerk of Penicuik family deposited in the National Records of Scotland, NRS GD18.

²⁴ Howard Colvin, ‘The beginnings of the architectural profession in Scotland’, *Architectural History*, 29 (1986) pp. 168–82.

²⁵ RIBA, Mylne diaries. Mylne was employed by the marquis of Lorne, later 5th duke of Argyll, from the early 1770s. He carried out work in London, Inverary, and Tobermory. NRS, GD44/49/16/1–52, papers of the Gordon family, accounts for building and repairing Gordon Castle, 1767–85.

²⁶ Such as ‘Vardy, John, architect, and surveyor of Chelsea Hospital and the Horse Guards’, Mortimer, *Universal director*, p. 28. Some of these sinecures were abolished in the so-called ‘Burke Act’ of 1782. See E. A. Reitan, ‘The Civil List in eighteenth-century British politics: parliamentary supremacy versus the independence of the crown’, *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966) pp. 318–37.

²⁷ RIBA, Mylne diary, 1 Jan. 1769.

²⁸ Ibid. St Paul’s yielded £50 pa and Canterbury just £15 15s. On Mylne and St Paul’s, see Ward, *The man who buried Nelson*.

²⁹ Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 205.

Indeed, he often did so in his early career for clients anxious about false accounting and fraud.³⁰ Equally as important as the income that this yielded, auditing accounts enhanced an architect's reputation for probity and efficiency. William Chambers, like Mylne, was well regarded as a source of accurate information on the relative costs of the different elements of the building process and his advice was sought from as far afield as Dublin.³¹ The demand for consistent information on tradesmen's costs for building works in London was such that, by the end of the century, detailed annual guides or price books were published, mostly produced by surveyors.³² Robert Adam did not pursue this route, being anxious to dissociate himself from the nuts-and-bolts of the building trade. Indeed, he and his brothers were better known for sharp practices than for probity or efficiency.³³ But Adam did develop another expertise to advance his income, albeit through the agency of his brothers: the manufacture of building materials, sometimes based on technical invention protected by patent.

The mid-eighteenth-century expansion in demand for building supplies prompted many ingenious recipes for new artificial materials, to replicate cheaply expensive components of high-quality buildings, such as carved and tooled marble. Coade stone, a cement-like material poured into moulds to make pillars, statues, and friezes, is probably the most famous, but several London architects also had materials manufactured under patent.³⁴ Robert Adam and his brothers purchased two patents for exterior stucco that they defended through court actions.³⁵ They also owned brick works and pavement stone quarries involving complex business partnerships.³⁶ William Chambers had a 'secret recipe for stucco' that he had used with great success on buildings at Kew Gardens and occasionally shared with friends.³⁷ Robert Mylne also had an interest in building materials and for many years imported volcanic ash from Naples – called 'pozzolana' – for selling to the trade and using in his own projects.³⁸

³⁰ RIBA, Mylne diary, 17 Sept. 1764. 'Looked over painters and marble cutters bill for Mr Briscoe', 22 Sept. 1764: 'Attended Mr Briscoe at Twickenham to see that everything was right.'

³¹ RIBA, CHA2/26, letter from Thomas Cooley on behalf of the Trustees for the Royal Exchange in Dublin, to William Chambers, 22 Aug. 1769, Dublin.

³² See *The builders price-book containing a correct list of the prices allowed by the most eminent surveyors in London, to the several artificers concerned in building* (London, 1781).

³³ Alastair Rowan, 'Adam and his office', in Giles Worsley, ed., *Adam in context: papers given at the Georgian Groups Symposium 1992* (London, 1992).

³⁴ Alison Kelly, 'Coade stone in Georgian architecture', *Architectural History*, 42 (1999), pp. 71–101.

³⁵ Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 49.

³⁶ As with Robert Campbell, merchant of Stirling and London, who was in partnership in the quarrying and pavement laying business in the 1760s and 1770s. Stana Nenadic, 'Military men, business men and the "business" of patronage in eighteenth-century London', in Nenadic, ed., *Scots in London*.

³⁷ RIBA, CHA2/136, William Chambers to William Seward, 15 Nov. 1790, London.

³⁸ RIBA, Mylne diary for 1770 records his imports from Rome comprising 'pozzolana', a case of pictures, a case of prints, and marble.

Investment in building material production was paralleled by investment in the building process. This required capital as well as technical expertise and, like all speculation, was risky to finances and reputations. Both John Baxter and James Craig in Edinburgh were involved in speculations on the eastern periphery of the New Town where plots of land could be purchased for domestic and commercial development, the former at Greenside and the latter at St James Court.³⁹ Mylne had financial investments with family members in buildings in both Edinburgh and London, the latter through his brother-in-law, John Hunter.⁴⁰ William Chambers invested in the Berners Street housing development in Marylebone, comprising twenty houses, including one for himself, undertaken in the 1760s in conjunction with a partner who was a plasterer by trade.⁴¹ The most famous speculative building development of the age was the Adelphi scheme of high-quality commercial and domestic properties on the north bank of the Thames, built by Adam and his brothers in the late 1760s. The project employed many thousands of workers, attracted interest and controversy in equal measure, but eventually collapsed in bankruptcy in the financial crisis of 1772. The Adams rescued their finances, though not their reputations, through recourse to an equally speculative lottery scheme.⁴²

In developing their careers, self-styled architects not only engaged in building activity but also formed strategies that included the public presentation of themselves and their domestic life. Robert Adam had a clear idea of setting up a house in London that would act as showcase for his talents and taste, and before he left England to train in Europe was window-shopping for this future establishment. 'I see a thousand things every day that would answer charmingly for our habitation that would tempt a saint.'⁴³ Adam and his brothers were preoccupied with clothing and personal image and corresponded on the costs this entailed. With more modest ambitions at the outset of his European training, Robert Mylne had fewer thoughts on house and dress, but as his success in Italy grew and the prospect of a London career became a reality, he wrote home on the subject of appropriate dress. Mylne's approach to personal appearance differed from that of the Adam brothers, but was likewise part of a strategy for entering the London marketplace. Writing to his brother from Italy in 1758, 'an Architect pursuing business should appear as much a

³⁹ Ann Simpson and James Simpson, 'John Baxter, architect, and the patronage of the fourth duke of Gordon', *Bulletin of the Georgian Society*, 2 (1973), pp. 47–57. Cruft and Fraser, eds., *Craig*.

⁴⁰ RIBA, Mylne diary, 1 Jan. 1769. Mylne diary, 19 Apr. 1770, details £1,500 borrowed from 'Dr Hunter'.

⁴¹ John Harris, *Sir William Chambers: knight of the Polar Star* (London, 1970), pp. 72–3.

⁴² Alistair Rowan, 'After the Adelphi: forgotten years in the Adam brothers' practice', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 72 (1974), pp. 659–710.

⁴³ NRS, GD18/4746, Robert Adam to Helen Adam, Oct. 1754, London.

Quaker as ever he can'.⁴⁴ A year later, now based in London and competing for the Blackfriars Bridge contract, he confided to his family in Edinburgh, 'to make it the career to be accomplished, it is necessary that, besides an ingenious drawing, an impudent face and good friends, I should have a shell and lodgings that bespeaks affluence. For they won't probably trust a man with £160,000 that appears poor.'⁴⁵ As it turned out, he was correct on all counts, though not all of his business contemporaries had such a clear insight to how the market was constructing the professional persona as one who could appear possessed of gentlemanly affluence and seriousness, but not at a client's expense.⁴⁶

Edinburgh architects were also concerned with personal image and display. James Craig dressed unusually well for a man of his means, as evidenced by a portrait of c. 1780 and an inventory of clothing at his death in 1795.⁴⁷ Despite his early success in the New Town competition, Craig died in considerable debt and living in a small flat in the Old Town. With little to impress in the modest tenement exterior, the interior was packed with a remarkable collection of books, pictures and prints, classical statues and busts, along with other decorative artefacts, some of which had appeared in his portrait and all of which had been designed to create the impression of a man of cosmopolitan learning and taste, despite his never having been out of Britain and only rarely ventured forth out of Scotland.⁴⁸ Craig's pictures and antiques reflected a further characteristic of the complex market strategy employed by architects: collecting. All the individuals considered in this article invested time and money in acquiring collections which were used to generate extra-professional income through buying and selling and to forge a valuable market identity associated with leisure and learning. This was a common characteristic of eighteenth-century professionals from medical men to lawyers.⁴⁹ John Baxter, Craig's contemporary in Edinburgh, owned a great collection that formed the bulk of his wealth and was sold at his death in over 600 lots.⁵⁰ The importance of collecting in the careers of Adam and Chambers is well known from the auctions that took place during the lifetime of the former when faced with bankruptcy, and following the death of

⁴⁴ RIBA, Myfam/4/34, Robert Mylne to William Mylne, 23 Sept. 1758, Rome.

⁴⁵ RIBA, Myfam/4/46, Robert Mylne to Thomas Mylne, Aug. 1759, London.

⁴⁶ Nenadic, 'Portraits of Scottish professional men'.

⁴⁷ NRS, CC8/8/130/521, testament dative of James Craig, 11 Nov. 1795, Edinburgh.

⁴⁸ Ibid. See also Iain Gordon Brown, 'Craig's library: a first investigation', in Cruft and Fraser, eds., *James Craig*.

⁴⁹ The largest group of professional collectors, if printed sales catalogues can be taken as a guide, were Church of England clergymen, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, print sales catalogues, 1716–1812.

⁵⁰ See *A catalogue of the valuable and choice collection of prints, books of prints, original pictures and drawings, books in various languages, busts and plaster figures, mathematical, surveying and drawing instruments, the property of the late Mr John Baxter, architect in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1798).

both.⁵¹ Less well known, because the collections remained intact in the family home until the 1920s, was the antiquarian collecting of Robert Mylne.⁵²

Mylne collected Old Master prints and drawings, books and books of drawings, paintings, coins and medals. He exploited connections made in Europe to act as a dealer in antiquities, pictures, tapestry, and Jacobite memorabilia. With limited finances on first going to Italy, and without the noble connections of Adam (who, like Baxter, made purchases on behalf of his patrons),⁵³ Mylne's collecting began modestly with views of Sicilian ruins and buildings. His encounter with Sicily was occasioned by an invitation in 1757 from Richard Phelps, a wealthy connoisseur living in Rome. Mylne undertook a series of drawings for Phelps and began acquiring antique maps and engravings of Sicily with publication in mind, as a strategy for making a name in London.⁵⁴ Publication was a well-established device among architects for advertising their practical expertise and aesthetic credentials, for securing relationships with patrons through subscription lists and for generating income. Indeed, those architects who wrote standard technical guides and pattern-books, which sold in vast numbers to builders, derived a larger income from their publications than from design.⁵⁵

Mylne's 'antiquities of Sicily' did not appear in print, though he collected in this field throughout his life. Partly, he was too busy when he first arrived in London to spend time on the complex business of publishing a volume of engravings, though he published individual prints. He also realized that a publication 'in progress' was as valuable as one complete, for it allowed him to maintain a correspondence with an array of antiquarians, artists, scholars, and noblemen in Britain and Europe. Mylne's identity as artist and man of learning was constructed through the objects and images that he owned and sought to collect, and through writing and discussing them with friends. His correspondents on the Sicily project included Giovanni Piranesi and Johann Winckelmann in Rome and such luminaries in the world of art and collecting in Britain as the earl of Bute, Benjamin West, John Flaxman, Sir Joseph Banks, Dr James Hutton, and Horace Walpole.⁵⁶ Benjamin Franklin was a friend and correspondent, as was the greatest of all later eighteenth-century collectors, Sir William Hamilton, in Naples. A letter sent by Hamilton from Naples dated 31 January 1775 provides a flavour. It details that a mutual friend in Italy has died

⁵¹ D.J. Watkins, ed., *Sale catalogues of libraries of eminent persons* (London, 1972), iv; Tait, 'Robert Adam's drawings'; A *catalogue of the genuine and valuable prints and drawings of that eminent architect, the late Sir William Chambers FRS* (London, 1811).

⁵² RIBA, Myfam box 23 17–35, sales catalogues of 1922 for the contents of Great Amwell House in Hertfordshire.

⁵³ John Fleming, *Robert Adam and his circle in Edinburgh and Rome* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), ch. 5, *passim*.

⁵⁴ RIBA, Myfam/4/3, Robert Mylne to William Mylne, 26 Apr. 1758, Rome.

⁵⁵ Harris and Savage, *British Architectural Books*.

⁵⁶ RIBA, Myfam box 23 17–35, Great Amwell sales catalogue, 1922.

and that he is sending Mylne a 'packet' (possibly of prints) with Lady Mary Duncan.⁵⁷ He encourages Mylne to continue with his 'Sicilian work' and offers help if needed (notably, this was almost two decades after the project began). 'I shall be glad of a proof print of your map. If you publish by subscription I am sure of getting a few here.' Hamilton also mentioned a paper on Vesuvius to be sent to the Society of Antiquaries in London, and an engraving of 'the vase' to be undertaken by their old friend, Piranesi.⁵⁸

By combining a range of building industry concerns alongside antiquarian and publication interests, successful architects in London and Edinburgh could generate a good income. In 1769, Mylne estimated his annual income at £800, about half that sum from the Blackfriars Bridge project, with £85 from property in Edinburgh and £50 from India Stocks purchased since setting up in London just ten years earlier.⁵⁹ But the extra-professional life and identity as scholar, artist, and collector, though necessary for success, was costly, as Mylne lamented on the demands of his London career: 'I have been obliged to turn another, in pamphlets and in newspapers. I have been obliged to speak in public and reason with every species of men, from Astronomers down to porters';⁶⁰ a view that was echoed in the famous comment by the Edinburgh medic John Gregory, 'life is too short for every study that may be deemed ornamental to a physician; it will not even allow time for every study that has some connection with physic'.⁶¹ Most of the architect-builders' complex income-generating strategies had vanished by the mid-nineteenth century. Some activities, such as surveying, became the exclusive preserve of a distinct profession, whilst others were left firmly in the grasp of commercial builders. Engineering, with its rapidly growing technical demands and client-base dominated by public institutions, was quickly established as a distinct group of practitioners with scientific credentials attracting certain former self-styled architects, including Robert Mylne, to re-brand themselves in that category of expertise.⁶² Collecting or trading antiquities was increasingly beyond most architects' financial means and European training, the main route into the antiques trade, was replaced by office-based tutelage. Many resisted these change, for in addition to providing income, these overlapping areas of market expertise were useful in establishing relationships with personal patrons and they were also central to wider family interests.

⁵⁷ Mylne had worked for Lady Mary Duncan as early as 1764. RIBA, Mylne diary, 23 Nov. 1764, 'Waited on Lady Mary Duncan half day.'

⁵⁸ RIBA, Myfam/5/24, Sir William Hamilton to Robert Mylne, 31 Jan. 1775, Naples.

⁵⁹ RIBA, Mylne diary, 1 Jan. 1769. However, getting payment for Blackfriars Bridge was not easy. See Roger Woodley, '"A very mortifying situation". Robert Mylne's struggle to get paid for Blackfriars Bridge', *Architectural History*, 43 (2000), pp. 172–86.

⁶⁰ RIBA, Myfam/4/49, Robert Mylne to Thomas Mylne, 24 Jan. 1760, London.

⁶¹ John Gregory, *Lectures on the duties and qualifications of a physician* (London, 1772), p. 67.

⁶² Saint, *Architect and engineer*.

II

Kin connections and reputation were crucial for building a market position in all areas of eighteenth-century business. In an age when commercial policing was weak and family was the basis of trust, the financial status and public behaviour of relatives was critical for success among professionals and entrepreneur alike.⁶³ This fact became critically important for the early career of Mylne when his brother, an architect-builder in Edinburgh, faced disgrace and possible prosecution in 1769 following the collapse of a bridge under construction in the city, which resulted in five deaths. A family crisis ensued over the threat to Robert's fortunes in London and the unfortunate brother, now rendered bankrupt, had no option but to leave Britain to try his luck in America as a planter. Though William Mylne later returned to the building trade, the closest that he ever got to mainland Britain was a surveying practice in Dublin.⁶⁴ It is perhaps no coincidence that one issue that Robert sought to champion in his later career was health and safety in buildings.⁶⁵ It is also no coincidence that from the time of his brother's disgrace, Robert Mylne began efforts to redress the reputational balance through memorializing his family's achievements over the several generations in which they had acted as master masons to the crown in Scotland. He commissioned monuments and plaques and also a genealogical history; an antiquarian interest in family seen among other professionals and mirroring the preoccupation of elite patrons.⁶⁶

Much of the expertise employed by self-styled architects in their core business of designing buildings, choosing materials, and employing tradesmen was founded in a direct personal experience and family background in the building industry. Some, such as Mylne and Craig, served formal trade apprenticeships in modest areas of the building industry. Others, such as Baxter or Adam, worked for many years in the routine aspects of a family business and, whilst on site or in the drawing office, also engaged in part-time study through fieldwork and reading.⁶⁷ By the later eighteenth century, a non-family pupilage system in the office of a successful London architect, whose numbers included both Chambers and Mylne, was a common training system and an additional source of income for senior architects involved.⁶⁸ But family-based training remained a

⁶³ Stana Nenadic, 'The small family firm in Victorian Britain', *Business History*, 35 (1993), pp. 86–114; Nenadic, 'Military men'.

⁶⁴ NRS, GD1/51/34, the Appellant's Case (William Mylne) against the Magistrates and Council of Edinburgh, to be heard at the bar of the House of Lords, 15 Feb. 1770; Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 578.

⁶⁵ See *Resolutions of the Associated Architects, with the report of a committee by them appointed to consider the causes of frequent fires* (London, 1793).

⁶⁶ RIBA, Mylne diary for 1771 includes, at the end, drawings for a Mylne family crest and various genealogical details. See also NRS, GD1/51/47, James Cant to Robert Mylne, 13 Jan. 1775, Perth, regarding an antiquarian publication on the Mylne family.

⁶⁷ See Alistair Rowan, 'William Adam's library', *Architectural Heritage*, 1 (1990), pp. 8–33.

⁶⁸ Barrington Kaye, *The development of the architectural profession in Britain* (London, 1960), ch. 7, *passim*.

norm because it kept financial and informational resources in family hands and because involvement in speculative building yielded great profits for families if they worked strategically in its different branches for a collective family interest.

Whilst demonstrating the importance of family for his career, and exploiting his family in Edinburgh for a constant flow of Scottish contracts, Robert Mylne was not so embedded in family interests in London as some contemporaries. George Dance (1741–1825), prominent designer of London public buildings and town planning schemes, and a good friend of Mylne, was the son of a prominent London architect and grandson of a London mason on his father's side and a London surveyor on his mother's side.⁶⁹ James Wyatt (1746–1813), the greatest of the later eighteenth century country-house designers, who operated a large London office with many trainees, including his own sons and nephews, was part of an extended Staffordshire family that combined farming with timber supply, building, and design. He was one of seven sons who were mostly raised into different aspects of the family firm, trained as a mason before being sent to Italy as a youth for study as an architect once his artistic talent was recognized.⁷⁰ His brother Samuel was trained as a carpenter, progressed to 'clerk of works' in the family firm and undertook work as both a building contractor and timber merchant alongside his later London practice as an architect and lighthouse engineer. The Wyatts' eldest brother inherited and ran the family farm and timber business and the second son in the sibling hierarchy was trained and practised as a surgeon in London, a useful family connection for an architect, as Robert Mylne also demonstrated through brother-in-law John Hunter. Indeed, John Wyatt the surgeon not only provided his younger brothers with a home in London when first setting out in business, but also offered patronage connections through his membership of the Royal Society and brokered business opportunities through being a shareholder in commercial building ventures.⁷¹

Family not only provided a reputation and ancestry, training, and contacts, but was also a source of funds for business investment and partnerships. This was nowhere more apparent than in the market strategies of Robert Adam and his siblings. With a father who had practised with success in Scotland as architect and builder and advanced his family status through the acquisition of a small estate, Robert Adam, a second son, was well placed to exploit his clear talent on a national stage. His eldest brother John, a sometime architect and garden designer, minor laird, and businessman in Scotland, promoted this ambition and planned from the outset that Robert's anticipated success would benefit the family more widely. John Adam provided some of the funds to support Robert during his several years in Italy and, once established in London, not only

⁶⁹ Roger Bowdler, 'George Dance the younger', *ODNB*.

⁷⁰ John Martin Robinson, 'James Wyatt', *ODNB*.

⁷¹ G. H. L. Le May, 'Samuel Wyatt', *ODNB*.

continued to fund Robert until his business was established, but also invested heavily in the Adelphi partnership.⁷² Writing from Italy, Robert Adam kept his family abreast of his own progress and provided a commentary on rival families, including the Mylnes.

There are two sons of Deacon Milns in Rome at present, studying architecture, one of them [William] had study'd in France and has accordingly that abominable taste in perfection. The other who came straight from Scotland [Robert] has made great progress, and begins to draw extremely well so that if he goes on he may become much better than any of those beggarly fellows who torment our national city, for which Reason to keep all superiority in our own hands it will be absolutely necessary that the family of Adam all see foreign parts, without which that Miln may turn to our disadvantage, as I assure you he promises well and having it to say he was abroad so long may have sway with many of our Scotch Dons for whom as he is poor he will work much cheaper than we can do.⁷³

In the early 1770s, when the Wyatt family first came to prominence in London with designs for the Pantheon in Oxford Street, Robert Adam was equally concerned at the rise of this new rival family, accusing them of plagiarism, with some foundation since Samuel Wyatt had worked for a while as Adam's clerk of works.

Investing in an ambitious and able family member could pay dividends for less talented male kin, and bring advantageous marriages for sisters and nieces. Much of Robert Adam's career strategy was communicated to the family via correspondence with his sisters in Edinburgh, and the sisters in turn brokered the flow of family funds to London and offered advice and support. Adam's sisters even complied with his suggestions that they cultivate rich friends as useful potential patrons for his business and improve their polite credentials through taking French classes.⁷⁴ Investments such as these could, however, rebound on family interests. The Adam brothers' London Adelphi scheme famously brought financial ruin for John Adam, the elder brother in Scotland and the Adam brothers' scandalous domestic affairs embarrassed their Edinburgh sisters. In his final years, Robert Adam was estranged from much of his family as was James Wyatt, who despite spectacular career success and much family support in associated trades and commerce was such a poor businessman that he died 'more or less bankrupt', leaving a wife in straitened circumstances and no resources to help his sons in their careers.⁷⁵ For many years, Robert Mylne's father was anxious that his son's personal ambitions would compromise the family business and relations with Scottish patrons. In

⁷² Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 45.

⁷³ NRS, GD18/4793, Robert Adam to Helen Adam, 12 Dec. 1755, Rome.

⁷⁴ NRS, GD18/4814, Robert Adam to Mary Adam, 21 Aug. 1756, Rome; NRS, GD18/4816, Robert Adam to Helen Adam, 4 Sept. 1756, Rome. See also Katharine Glover, *Elite women and polite society in eighteenth century Scotland* (London, 2011).

⁷⁵ Robinson, 'James Wyatt', *ODNB*.

Italy, Robert sought to assuage his father's fears and implored him to 'support this one effort to appear something in the world'.⁷⁶ Robert Mylne, who owed much of his mid-career success to London-based Scottish physicians and surgeons, John and William Hunter, to whom he was related by marriage, further illustrates that relationships within families could be fraught. With a reputation for a fiery temper, and a family inheritance dispute in progress, Mylne resented his obligations to brother-in-law, John Hunter, which erupted in 1772 into a furious row and a correspondence with a patron over the question of who had brought about the first introduction. The reply, which suggests that patrons kept a mental record of the connections that formed their patronage networks, was disapproving.

Lord Abingdon's complements to Mr Mylne. His first knowledge of him and his abilities was from Mr Henry Fermor and confirmed by Doctor Smith who was then present. Lord A. is very sorry to find that two such rational men as Mr Mylne and Mr Hunter should have such a rancorous squabble.⁷⁷

Architects demonstrated a variety of family-based patronage relationships with their employers, male and female.⁷⁸ Family patrons provided funding for training, as in the case of James Baxter, whose builder-father had a long-standing relationship with Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, who supported the younger Baxter in his studies abroad along with two young artists, the Runciman brothers.⁷⁹ Robert Adam's continental training was also partly undertaken as companion to a young nobleman, who was the son of a connection of Adam senior.⁸⁰ With great noblemen supporting the most talented practitioners from their own part of the country, regional connections were crucial. Hence, Adam and Mylne had a natural monopoly with the Scottish aristocracy, whilst Robert Chambers, with a Scottish ancestry but few current family interests north of the border, found it difficult to make headway when searching out Scottish contracts in his early career, despite travelling through the country in person, a fact that was reported with relish within the Adam family network.⁸¹ Relationships could be intimate, as seen in the case of London-based George Steuart (1730–1806), a Gaelic-speaking architect and house decorator, who worked almost exclusively in both Scotland and London for the duke of Atholl, who also employed Steuart's brother as a house painter, and maintained a regular, gossipy correspondence with his noble 'friend' when the duke was away

⁷⁶ RIBA, Myfam/4/11, Robert Mylne to Thomas Mylne, 13 Dec. 1754, Lyon; RIBA, Myfam/4/16, Robert Mylne to Thomas Mylne, including letter to be forwarded to duke of Atholl, 11 Feb. 1756, Rome.

⁷⁷ RIBA, Myfam/5/10, Mylne to Lord Abingdon, 25 May 1772, London; RIBA, Myfam/5/11, Lord Abingdon to Mylne, 25 May 1772, London.

⁷⁸ Lucy Worsley, 'Female architectural patronage in the eighteenth century and the case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley', *Architectural History*, 48 (2005), pp. 139–62.

⁷⁹ NRS, GD18/5015, John Baxter to John Baxter, 3 Jan. 1765, Rome.

⁸⁰ Fleming, *Robert Adam*, ch. 4, passim.

⁸¹ NRS, GD18/4818, John Adam to Mary Adam, 14 Sept. 1756, Fort George.

from the capital.⁸² Indeed, families as a type of social organization that transcended the market were crucial devices for mediating and marketing expertise in the eighteenth-century building industry. Families were also paralleled in importance by other forms of non-market eighteenth-century organizational activity in the form of clubs and societies.

III

Like many of his contemporaries, Robert Mylne was a busy and practical building contractor, surveyor, building-accounts auditor, engineer, and antiquarian as well as building designer whose market expertise was constantly mutating. Family and patronage networks were key to his commercial success and he constructed parallel relationships with the craftsmen and labourers that he employed and also with his peers.⁸³ He was part of various convivial social groups involving fellow professionals in London and was one of the founder members of the elite Architects Club, comprising about a dozen individuals, which was formed in London in 1791 along similar lines to the Club of the College of Physicians. Indeed, the first set of rules was written on the back of a copy of the rules and membership list for the latter organization.⁸⁴

The Architects Club was founded with exclusivity in mind, since membership was conditional on having studied in Europe, and some aspects of the Club were modelled on the Italian arts academies that the mostly middle-aged members had encountered in their early careers.⁸⁵ In contrast, however, to an apparently backward referencing and sociability focused elite-patronage agenda, the first actions of the Club were to engage in debate on matters of public interest concerning buildings, to undertake research on health and safety issues, and to publish technical recommendations. The Architects Club also sought to provide systematic devices whereby its members' accounts were routinely 'audited' in the interests of probity. These three areas of activity – exclusive sociability, the regulation of technical standards, and collective auditing of accounts – had been evolving as organizational devices amongst London architects and builders for decades. Co-ordinated sociability based on drinking and dining among distinctive occupational, migrant or status groups meeting in inns and taverns was a key feature of eighteenth-century masculine identity formation. The Architects Club met in the Thatched House Tavern in St James, which was a quasi-public place where members could be seen as a group. With its purpose-built clubrooms and 'chop house', this tavern was, for many decades,

⁸² Vicky Coltman, 'Scottish architects in eighteenth-century London: the competition for patronage and the representation of Scotland', in Nenadic, ed., *Scots in London*.

⁸³ RIBA, Mylne diary, 5 Dec. 1766, 'Gave a dinner to the Tradesmen of St Pauls £12 2s.' is a typical entry.

⁸⁴ RIBA, HoH/1–2, papers relating to the Architects Club, 1791–7.

⁸⁵ Frank Salmon, 'British architects and the Florentine academy, 1753–1794', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 34 (1990), pp. 199–214.

the chosen meeting place for several elite bodies, such as the club of the Royal College of Physicians and, from 1799, the Dilettanti Society, which included architects among its membership. Indeed, the Dilettanti Society funded the European studies of one of the Architects Club's founder members, Nicholas Revett.⁸⁶ It is worth noting, in passing, that the Society of Civil Engineers, of which Robert Mylne was a founder member in 1771 and whose main purpose was technical information exchange through the reading and discussion of scientific papers, met in the less exalted King's Head Tavern in Holborn.⁸⁷

The spatial proximity of formalized groups with overlapping membership was significant for gossip or 'shop talk' within communities of interest. These bodies acted as tools of social control and a means for developing trust and reputation.⁸⁸ Attendance at meetings was an investment in social relations with an expectation of returns in the form of information, influence, or social credentials.⁸⁹ The meetings of groups such as the Architects Club involved ritualized forms of consumption focused on certain foods, particularly beef, with its patriotic and masculine associations, and drinking and toasting. The drinks chosen, and the toasts given, were serious affairs, commonly reported beyond the circle of attendees. For those present, the toasts created 'unity and resolve, a collective bonhomie . . . awareness of a shared past and a common set of goals in the present'.⁹⁰ The toasts, which could be lengthy and complex, were also performative and symbolic of a masculine physical presence. Grand dinners for craftsmen and workers involved in great London building projects, hosted and paid for by architects, were similarly reported by the mid-eighteenth century and sealed public reputations. Using such events to forge authority relationships with a workforce had utility for those who acted as building-project managers. Forging relationships with fellow architects through a drinking and dining club also had a utility in circumstances where market co-operation was necessary for business survival and where co-operative business behaviour was a feature of expertise.

Groups of architects and builders had banded together since the mid-eighteenth century in circumstances where a collective interest could be advanced in new ways. This was seen, for instance, in the founding of *The Builder's Magazine* in 1774 by a 'SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS, Each having undertaken the Department in which he particularly excels', which included advice and designs aimed at the trade and 'gentlemen' to assist in the 'construction of any Building, from a Palace to a Cottage' and involved designs for 'Churches,

⁸⁶ 'Pall Mall: clubland', *Old and New London: Vol 4* (1878), pp. 140–64, www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45188, accessed 13 July 2011.

⁸⁷ A. W. Skempton, *Civil engineers and engineering in Britain, 1600–1830* (Aldershot, 1996).

⁸⁸ Amy Milne-Smith, 'Club talk: gossip, masculinity and oral communities in late nineteenth-century London', *Gender and History*, 21 (2009), pp. 86–106.

⁸⁹ Nan Lin, 'Building a network theory of social capital', *Connections*, 22 (1999), pp. 28–51.

⁹⁰ Martyn Powell, 'Political toasting in eighteenth-century Ireland', *History*, 91 (2006), pp. 508–29.

Hospitals and other public Buildings'.⁹¹ But, if magazine publishing offered a new market for architects and their associated trades, the market behaviour of other emerging commercial groups undermined their position. This was particularly seen in the growing role of insurance companies as a function of rapid and speculative commercial building in London and innovation in the finance industry, whose members were routinely blamed for fraud through deliberate fire-raising. Concern about building safety in London was hardly new, but fraud-motivated fires were, as was the means for exposing such concern through the press in the public interest. The problem was highlighted in the *Middlesex Journal* in 1769 –

Such frequent and dangerous frauds are committed in buildings for sale or hire, in this country, especially in and about London, which are generally and justly complained of; the materials being so bad, and the work so slight, that those houses are subject to fall in a few years, and to be burnt in a few hours, to the loss of many lives and much property, that the most vigilant and rigorous precautions ought to be taken, by proper laws, to prevent such enormous frauds and destructive calamities.⁹²

The newspaper article called for a system of building inspection, controlled by commissioners appointed by parliament and undertaken by 'inspectors' who 'ought to be architects, with good yearly salaries, as one or two hundred pounds' who visited and reported, for public record, on building schemes in process and also examined brick-kilns, with authority to destroy sub-standard bricks.

Little came of this particular initiative, though some related aspects of building control were introduced in London in the mid-1770s, but there were other endeavours to harness an informal system of collective building inspection in high-profile buildings. In 1791, for instance, Sir William Chambers inserted a lengthy notice in *Lloyds Evening Post* following reports of loud cracking noises coming from joists in the fabric of the Royal Academy building in Somerset Place. 'As well as for his own, as for the satisfaction of the Public' he requested the 'attendance of some Gentlemen of eminence in the profession, as architects and surveyors' to inspect the state of the floor in the exhibition room and write a report. The report, in full, with details of the examination and offering full reassurance as to the building's safety was published, together with the names of nine men including Robert Adam and Richard Jupp.⁹³

Continuing the interest in building safety, the principal published output of the Architects Club was the 1793 *Report of a committee by them appointed to consider*

⁹¹ *Public Advertiser*, 26 Aug. 1774.

⁹² *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, 27 July 1769.

⁹³ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 10 Jan. 1791.

the causes of the frequent fires and the best means of preventing the like in future. The background to this initiative was explained as follows:

The number of lives lost within a few years; the immense property in great manufactures, and public and private buildings, destroyed by accident, or by Incendiaries (some of whom have been executed for the crime) forms a melancholy catalogue, more than sufficient to call into action the exertions of Men, in the practice of a liberal profession.⁹⁴

Based on research in existing accounts of building techniques that inhibited the spread of fire and on fire-retarding treatments for building materials, the committee also undertook practical experiments drawing on the scientific interests of noble patrons and on family connections with building firms to access newly constructed townhouses in which to carry out controlled fires. One of the participants in the Architects Club's research into building safety was the earl of Stanhope, whose fire prevention technique was much trumpeted in the 1793 report,⁹⁵ whilst builder Richard Holland, brother of architect Henry Holland, made houses available for the fire experiments. The committee recommended that building regulation as defined by act of parliament should be revised and also suggested a need for better regulation of fire insurance offices, arguing that uncontrolled insurance pay-outs, rather than faults in the building industry, were responsible for the large numbers of fires in London. The report, which was published and widely advertised in the press, was deeply embedded in the financial and reputational affairs of architects, builders, and building material manufacturers as well as reflecting the interests of such public-spirited noblemen as Stanhope.

Accounts of nineteenth-century professionalization conventionally suggest that the process generated a cultural perception among practitioners and, more widely in society, that 'professional people, rightly or wrongly, see themselves as above the main economic battle'.⁹⁶ Yet, the changes that organized groups of eighteenth-century architect-builders introduced do not prefigure the mid-nineteenth-century creation of an institutional profession, with the divorce of the architect as designer from the building trade. The Architects Club, which in teleological accounts of professionalization is commonly seen as an early precursor of the Institute of British Architects,⁹⁷ was a device to regulate the technical and financial aspects of the building industry and to support the reputation of architect-builders, but not to remove architects from participating in the building industry or in those other activities central to their incomes such as surveying or engineering. The Architects Club was fundamentally concerned with effective engagement in the 'economic battle' through reinforcing the

⁹⁴ *Resolutions of the Associated Architects*, p. 32.

⁹⁵ RIBA, HoH/1/4/1-2 and 1/5/1-2, correspondence between Henry Holland, chairman of the committee of the Architects Club, and Charles 3rd earl of Stanhope, Mar. 1792.

⁹⁶ Perkin, *Professional society*, p. 117.

⁹⁷ Colvin, *Dictionary*, 'Introduction'; Kaye, *Architectural profession*.

multiple devices that had already secured success for the eighteenth-century architect-builder as an individual possessed of multiple and fluid expertise.

Yet, there was one area of intended market intervention in the interests of collective reputation where the Architects Club was singularly unsuccessful, and it was this that undermined all of its other activities. The market for expertise in building design, particularly in London, was competitive and brutal, as Robert Mylne discovered during the Blackfriars Bridge years and subsequently with newspaper campaigns to undermine his reputation when working on the New Cut drainage scheme.⁹⁸ Trust was low and clients frequently sought second opinions from competing practitioners, giving rise to acrimonious disputes amongst architects and with patrons, as highlighted in 1793 when Architects Club member, George Dance, wrote to Richard Jupp, another member, to warn him against interfering in his dispute with Henry Holland, a third member, over the 'affair of Mr Holland and Lord Thurlow'.⁹⁹ The Architects Club, which was a meeting of men who were long-established friends as well as rivals, included within its original remit an intention to formalize systematic auditing of accounts in the interests of collective harmony and client trust, but achieved little in this area of well-guarded relative market position. Collective recommendations on building reform, or the public exhibition of a collective expert opinion was relatively easy to accomplish because it compromised no single individual's interests. But 'interfering' with clients or pricing could not be tolerated when effective management of patronage relationships was so jealously guarded and where entrepreneurship and a commitment to family prevailed over other types of organizational interest. Robert Mylne acted as one of the peacemakers when friction between formerly close friends Henry Holland and George Dance threatened to destroy the Architects Club, urging them to set aside their differences and attend Club meetings.¹⁰⁰ Hence, with the fire-safety pamphlet published and social harmony restored, the Architects Club subsided into the least contentious of its three founding purposes, to act as an exclusive drinking and dining club for a small group of mostly middle-aged men who self-styled as architects when it suited them, but were also competing experts in other fields of knowledge and expertise that embraced and transcended the building industry in all its dimensions.

⁹⁸ Woodley, "A very mortifying situation".

⁹⁹ RIBA, HoH/2/10/7, letter by George Dance Jnr to Richard Jupp, 12 Aug. 1793.

¹⁰⁰ RIBA HoH/2/7/1-3, three letters by Robert Mylne to Henry Holland, 3 Apr., 15 May and 30 July 1792.